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by JOHN OSTRANDER LUKE McDONNELL & BOB LEWIS
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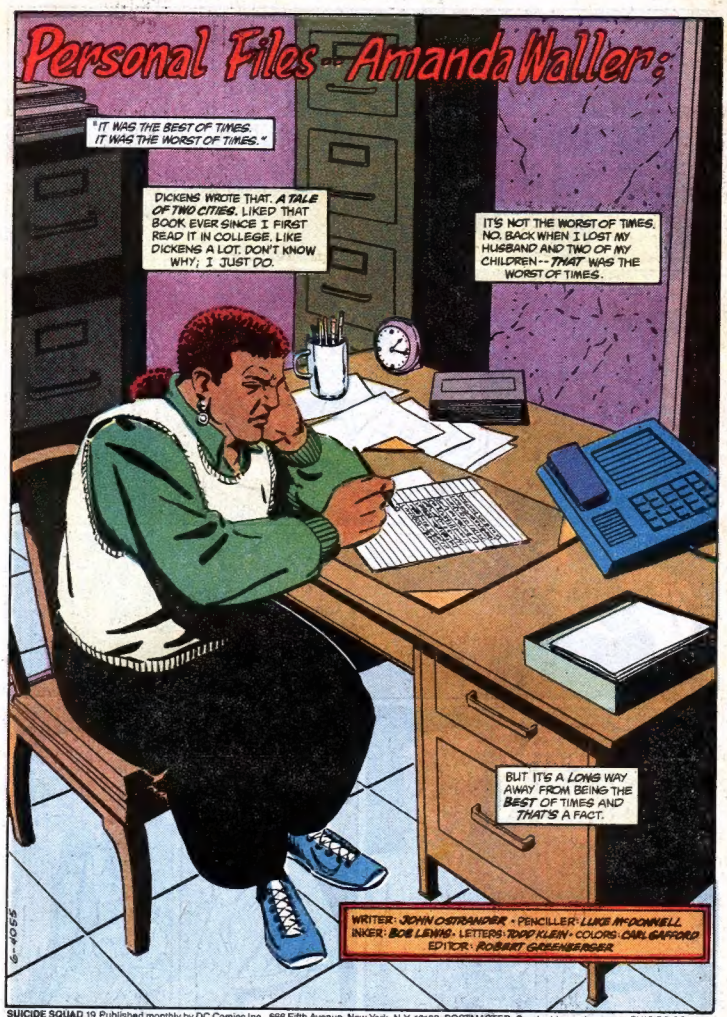

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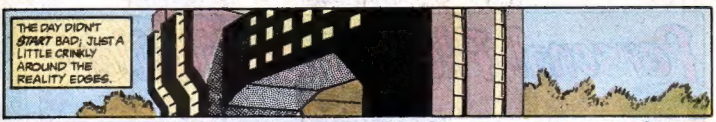
THE DAY DIDN'T START BAD; JUST A LITTLE CRINKLY AROUND THE REALITY EDGES.

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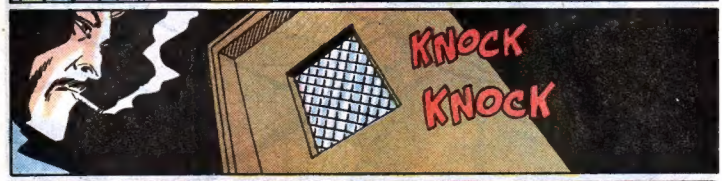
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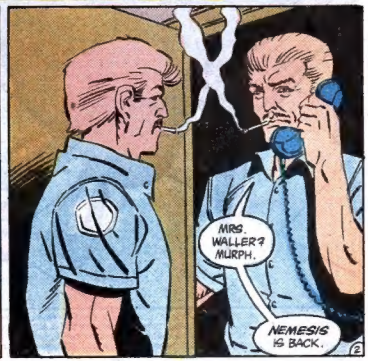
KNOCK

HEY, MURPH.


MRS. WALLER? MURPH.
NEMESIS IS BACK.

I KNOW. SAW HIM COME UP ON THE MONITORS, TOO.

LET HIM IN AND TELL HIM TO GO PUT HIS OWN DAMN FACE BACK ON. I'LL TALK WITH HIM *LATER*. WALLER OUT.

GETTING BACK TO *BUSINESS*--THAT DOO-HICKEY THERE IS THE CONTROL BOX FOR THE *IFRIT*, THE JIHAD'S SUCCESSOR TO THE DJINN.

ACCORDING TO FLAG, THEY USED WHAT REMAINED OF *MIND-BOGGLER'S* BRAIN AS THE TEMPLATE.

QUESTION IS--CAN WE *RE-PROGRAM* THE IFRIT SO THAT SHE WORKS FOR *US*? YVONNE? YOU'RE CHIEF RESEARCH SCIENTIST HERE.

I DUNNO. *THEORETICALLY*--SURE, OF COURSE. WHY NOT?

PRACTICALLY--WE DON'T KNOW *HOW* THE THING IS PUT TOGETHER.

PROF. CALLENDAR

WE CAN'T EVEN BE SURE WE CAN SHUT IT DOWN COMPLETELY WITHOUT DESTROYING THE IFRIT--WHICH, I ASSUME, IS CONTRARY TO OUR INTENT.

ACCORDING TO INFORMATION NIGHTSHADE OBTAINED WHEN SHE'D INFILTRATED THE JIHAD *BEFORE*, THE DEVICE STORES THE IFRIT DURING ATTACK SEQUENCES.

COMPUTER PROGRAMS CREATED AN ARTIFICIAL LIFE FOR HER--DESIGNED TO KEEP HER *SANE*--AND SHE HAS BEEN *AWAY* FROM THOSE A LONG TIME.

THE TECHNOLOGY USED IN CREATING THIS IS *CRUDE* BY METAN STANDARDS, BUT NOT TOTALLY *UNINTERESTING*. I SUPPOSE, WITH A LITTLE WORK, I COULD--

STAY BACK! I'LL DEAL WITH THIS!
...SET IT OFF BY ACCIDENT.
AAAAAGH!
M-VEST'S FORCE FIELD... SHIELDING ME...FROM IFRIT...BUT DISCHARGE FROM...WHERE OUR FIELDS...INTERFACE... COULD KILL ME!
4

NO... NO! ALL MY ENEMIES... AND MELLU!
DARLING! YOU CAN'T!

GAAARR!
THHHHHP!

HOW DID YOU...?
HIT THE RECALL BUTTON, RICK.
RAC. MY NAME'S RAC.

WRONG! IT'S MUD!
THAT STUPID M-VEST OF YOURS MUST'VE TRIGGERED THE DEVICE! WHY DIDN'T YOU WARN US THAT MIGHT HAPPEN?
I DIDN'T KNOW!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU DIDN'T KNOW?!
I DIDN'T BUILD THE M-VEST! I DON'T KNOW ALL OF ITS PROPERTIES! I'M A COP, NOT A SCIENTIST!
THEN WHY DID YOU TELL ME YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD DO SOMETHING WITH THIS IFRIT DEVICE?!
WELL, IT'S EARTH-ZONE TECHNOLOGY, ISN'T IT? WHICH IS RELATIVELY PRIMITIVE COMPARED TO META, YEG? I HAVE ENOUGH BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF METAN DEVICES, AND SO...
BOY, YOU KEEP UP THIS ATTITUDE AND I WILL PERSONALLY SEE TO IT. YOU GET BACK TO YOUR BLAMED META-ZONE BY KICKING YOUR BUTT BACK THERE!
PHONE, AMANDA.
YEAH, WHAT?
UH... THEY GOT A SITUATION OVER AT YEAGER, MRS. WALLER. THEY'D LIKE YOU AND DR. LAGRIEVE OVER THERE A.S.A.P.
ON OUR WAY. ANYTHING ELSE?
WELL, I THINK BLACK ORCHID'S BEEN IN THE SYSTEM AGAIN. I GOT HERE THIS MORNING AND FOUND ANOTHER ONE OF HER FLOWERS ON TOP OF MY TERMINAL.
THAT'S THE FOURTH TIME THIS WEEK ALONE! I KNOW IT'S PART OF OUR DEAL WITH HER--WE GIVE HER ACCESS, SHE GIVES US HELP--BUT WHAT THE HELL IS SHE UP TO?
HAVE WE DUG UP ANYTHING ON HER?
NOT SO FAR. MAYBE SHE'S JUST AN INFORMATION JUNKIE.
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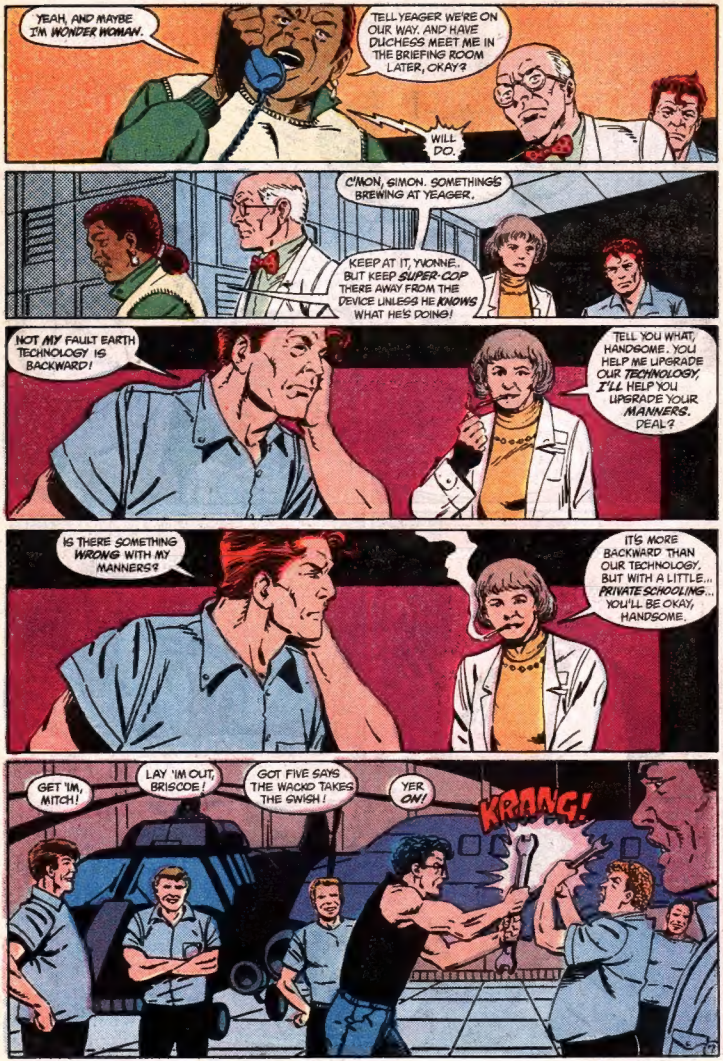
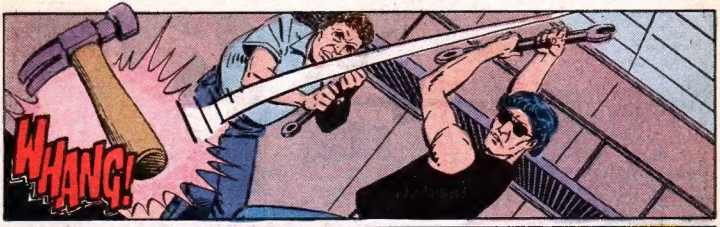

YEAH, AND MAYBE I'M WONDER WOMAN.
TELL YEAGER WE'RE ON OUR WAY. AND HAVE DUCHESS MEET ME IN THE BRIEFING ROOM LATER, OKAY?
WILL DO.
C'MON, SIMON. SOMETHING'S BREWING AT YEAGER.
KEEP AT IT, YVONNE. BUT KEEP SUPER-COP THERE AWAY FROM THE DEVICE UNLESS HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!
NOT MY FAULT EARTH TECHNOLOGY IS BACKWARD!
TELL YOU WHAT, HANDSOME. YOU HELP ME UPGRADE OUR TECHNOLOGY, I'LL HELP YOU UPGRADE YOUR MANNERS. DEAL?
IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY MANNERS?
IT'S MORE BACKWARD THAN OUR TECHNOLOGY. BUT WITH A LITTLE... PRIVATE SCHOOLING... YOU'LL BE OKAY, HANDSOME.
GET 'IM, MITCH!
LAY 'IM OUT, BRISCOE!
GOT FIVE SAYS THE WACKO TAKES THE SWISH!
YER ON!
KRANG!


WHANG!

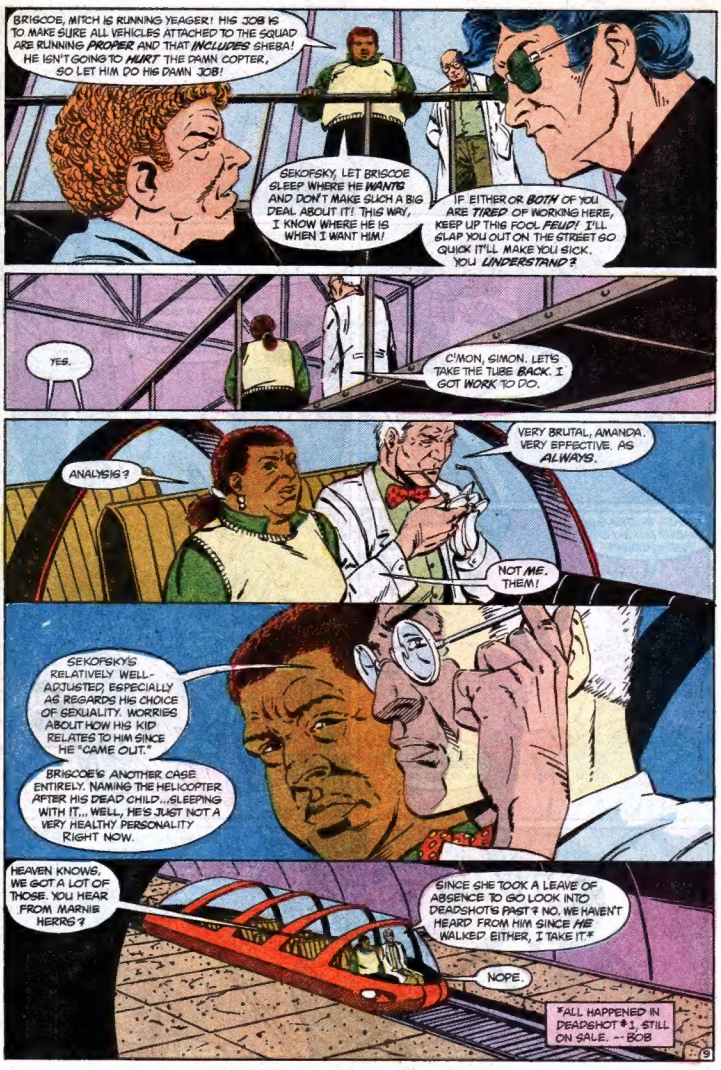
YOU BOYS REALLY WANTA FIGHT, I'M READY TO LAY YOU OUT.
OR YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

LOOK, I'M HEAD O' MAINTENANCE HERE, RIGHT? THIS WACKO BEEN SLEEPIN' IN THE DAMN COPTER AFTER I TOLE HIM HE COULDN'T!
TOLD THE QUEER NOBODY TOUCHES SHEBA BUT ME. DON'T LISTEN GOOD.

RATHER BE GAY THAN WACKO ANY DAY O' TH' WEEK, CREEP!
WHO YOU CALLIN' WACKO, SEKOFSKY?

CLANG!

THAT WAS MY LAST HAMMER. IF I HAVE TO COME DOWN THERE AND GET ANOTHER, YOU ARE BOTH IN A WORLD OF TROUBLE.


BRISCOE, MITCH IS RUNNING YEAGER! HIS JOB IS TO MAKE SURE ALL VEHICLES ATTACHED TO THE SQUAD ARE RUNNING PROPER AND THAT INCLUDES SHEBA! HE ISN'T GOING TO HURT THE DAMN COPTER, SO LET HIM DO HIS DAMN JOB!
SEKOFSKY, LET BRISCOE SLEEP WHERE HE WANTS AND DON'T MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL ABOUT IT! THIS WAY, I KNOW WHERE HE IS WHEN I WANT HIM!
IF EITHER OR BOTH OF YOU ARE TIRED OF WORKING HERE, KEEP UP THIS FOOL FEUD! I'LL SLAP YOU OUT ON THE STREET SO QUICK IT'LL MAKE YOU SICK. YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES.
C'MON, SIMON. LET'S TAKE THE TUBE BACK. I GOT WORK TO DO.
ANALYSIS?
VERY BRUTAL, AMANDA. VERY EFFECTIVE. AS ALWAYS.
NOT ME. THEM!
SEKOFSKY'S RELATIVELY WELL-ADJUSTED, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS HIS CHOICE OF SEXUALITY. WORRIES ABOUT HOW HIS KID RELATES TO HIM SINCE HE "CAME OUT."
BRISCOE'S ANOTHER CASE ENTIRELY. NAMING THE HELICOPTER AFTER HIS DEAD CHILD...SLEEPING WITH IT... WELL, HE'S JUST NOT A VERY HEALTHY PERSONALITY RIGHT NOW.
HEAVEN KNOWS, WE GOT A LOT OF THOSE. YOU HEAR FROM MARNIE HERRS?
SINCE SHE TOOK A LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO GO LOOK INTO DEADSHOT'S PAST? NO. WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE HE WALKED! EITHER, I TAKE IT.*
NOPE.
*ALL HAPPENED IN DEADSHOT #1, STILL ON SALE. --BOB

HOW'S NIGHTSHADE SINCE THAT FIASCO TO SAVE HER BROTHER?
SHE'S TALKED TO ME A LITTLE ABOUT IT, BUT SHE SEEMS MORE AT EASE TALKING TO REV. CRAEMER.
THAT BOTHER YOU?
"HEAVENS, NO. I GO TO CHURCH MYSELF, AMANDA, EVEN IF YOU DON'T. THE REV. CRAEMER'S A GOOD MAN AND A TRAINED COUNSELOR. NO, NO--EVE EDEN'S IN GOOD HANDS."
AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?
THE SUCCUBUS WAS CONFINED WITHIN ME.
I SEE. AND THAT'S WHY YOU CONTINUE TO MANIFEST THIS...WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?
SHADOWSTUFF. UNLESS I REALLY CONCENTRATE, I CAN'T KEEP IT IN. IT COMES FROM ME. FROM WITHIN ME. IT IS ME.
I HAVE A DEMON INSIDE OF ME, FATHER.
FATHER CRAEMER, AM I DAMNED?

DO YOU THINK GOD'S THAT *PETTY*, EVE? OR THAT UNAWARE? OR SO *HARSH* THAT YOU COULD BE SO UNFAIRLY JUDGED AND CONDEMNED FOR ACTS THAT ARE NOT YOURS?

RATHER THAN FEAR HIS--OR HER, IF YOU PREFER--JUDGMENT, WHY NOT TRUST TO HIS/HER MERCY?

YOU KNOW, IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH PERVERSE *PRIDE* PEOPLE SEEM TO TAKE IN THEIR SINS. "*O NO!* MY OFFENSE AGAINST GOD IS TOO *GREAT!* I'M THE GREATEST SINNER THE WORLD HAS EVER *SEEN!* I CAN'T BE FORGIVEN!"

THAT'S THE REAL SIN OF *JUDAS*, YOU KNOW. NOT THE BETRAYAL. JUDAS *REPENTED* HIS ACT BUT DIDN'T BELIEVE HE COULD BE FORGIVEN. A PERVERSE HUBRIS THAT *LED HIM TO SUICIDE*.

IS *THAT* WHAT I'VE GOT? A LITTLE PERVERSE HUBRIS?

THAT--AND MAYBE A SMALL COLD. YOUR FAITH IS DEEP, EVE. TRUST IN IT--*AND* YOURSELF, AND, MAYBE, IN GOD JUST A BIT MORE, TOO. OKAY?

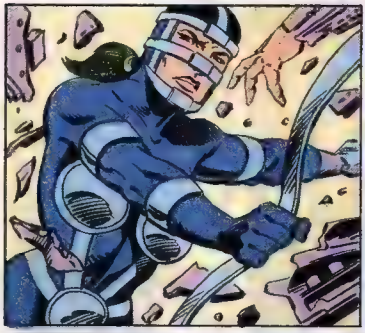
I'LL TRY. YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T EVEN DEALT WITH LARRY'S DEATH MUCH.

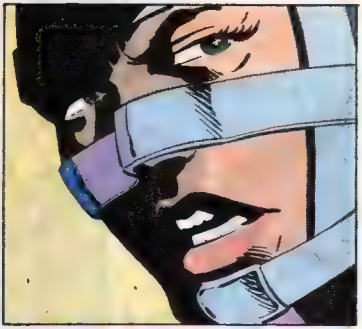
GOING BACK TO GET HIM HAD BEEN THE WHOLE FOCUS OF MY LIFE--MY REASON FOR JOINING THE SQUAD. NOW I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* TO DO. SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

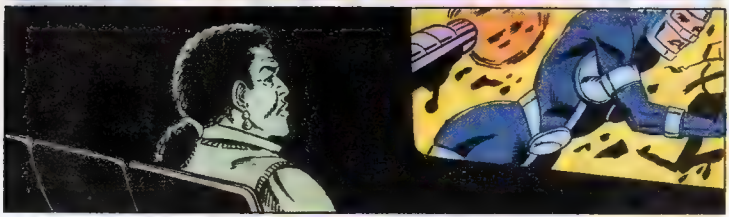
GENERALLY, ANY CHANGE YOU MAKE WHILE YOUR MIND IS IN TURMOIL IS LIKELY TO BE FOR THE *WORSE*.

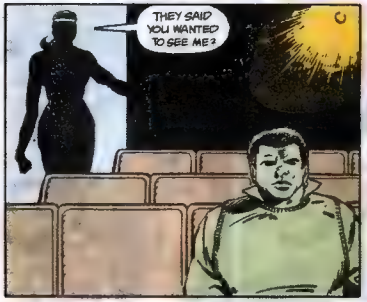
I'D SUGGEST YOU WAIT UNTIL YOU *KNOW* WHAT YOU WANT TO DO--AND THEN *DO IT*.

SOUNDS GOOD, FATHER. THANKS--*BUNCHES!*

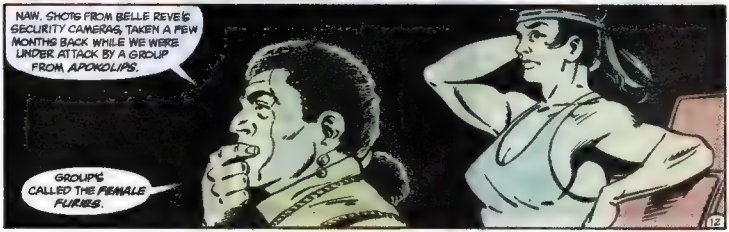




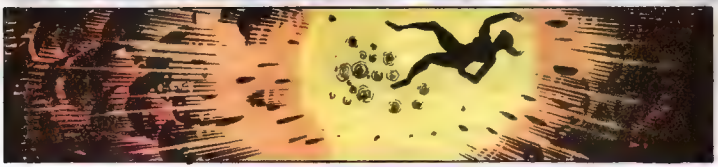


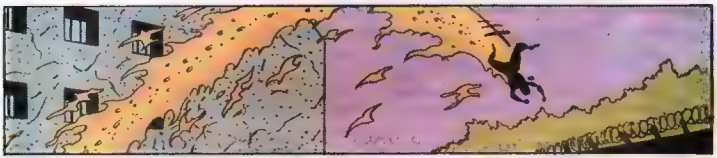

THEY SAID YOU WANTED TO SEE ME?

SIT DOWN, DUCHESS. TAKE A LOOK AT THESE FILMS.
WHAT ARE THEY--SKIN FLICKS?


NAW. SHOTS FROM BELLE REVE'S SECURITY CAMERAS, TAKEN A FEW MONTHS BACK WHILE WE WERE UNDER ATTACK BY A GROUP FROM APOKOLIPS.
GROUP'S CALLED THE FEMALE FURIES.

THEY ALMOST GOT CLEAR WHEN TWO OF THE BAND GOT INTO A CAT-FIGHT AS WE LET GO WITH THE HEAVY ARMAMENT.
WATCH WHAT HAPPENS.





WE DIDN'T CATCH WHO GOT HIT AND WE NEVER RECOVERED ANY BODY-- AND WE *LOOKED*.
MAYBE THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO BE FOUND

I DON'T KNOW. I THINK SHE WAS *TOUGHER* THAN THAT.
DON'T YOU... LASHINA?

LASHINA? WHO'S THAT?
ME, I DON'T REMEMBER WHO I AM. I GOT AMNESIA, REMEMBER?
HEY, THAT'S PRETTY FUNNY! I GOT AMNESIA AND YOU FORGET I HAVE IT!
GOTTA GET GOING. GOT THINGS TO DO
THANKS FOR THE FILM. NEXT TIME--HOW ABOUT A CARTOON? I LIKE YOSEMITE SAM BEST; REMINDS ME OF MY GRANNY. BYE.
IT'S HER. NO DOUBT IN MY MIND. DUCHESS IS LASHINA.
AND SHE'S FAKING THE AMNESIA. I'M CERTAIN OF THAT. BUT WHY? WHAT GAME IS SHE PLAYING? WHAT IS SHE UP TO?
THIS JUST IN...
I DO NOT LIKE BEING PLAYED FOR A FOOL.
THE MASKED VILLAIN CALLED THE MIRROR MASTER HAS STRUCK AT ANOTHER NEW ORLEANS BANK...

LATER THAT AFTERNOON WE INTERVIEWED A POTENTIAL NEW RECRUIT-- A MULTI-TIME LOSER WHO WENT BY THE NAME OF THE ORIGINAL DR. LIGHT.
WE READ YOUR LETTER, LIGHT. HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US?

PRISON GRAPEVINE. WORD HAS IT THAT THOSE WHO ARE---HOW SHALL I SAY--WILLING TO SHOW THEIR REPENTANCE FOR THEIR CRIMES COULD EARN EARLY RELEASE. AM I RIGHT?
BY THE WAY, YOU DON'T WORK WITH CHILDREN, DO YOU?

YOU TAKE ON SOME MISSIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, YOU SUCCEED, SURVIVE AND KEEP YOUR TRAP SHUT--YEAH, MAYBE

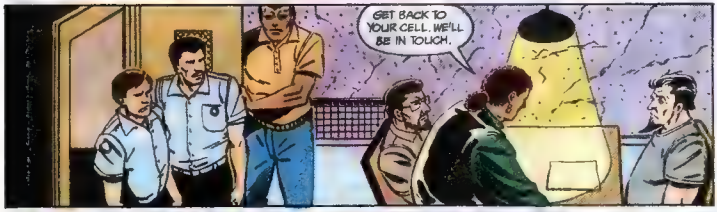
WELL, I'D LIKE TO BE CONSIDERED FOR SUCH A PROGRAM
BY THE WAY, YOU DON'T FIGHT CHILDREN, DO YOU?

YOU'RE A TOTAL LOSER, LIGHT. COULDN'T BEAT A BUNCH OF TWELVE YEAR OLDS.
WE NEED SOMEONE DANGEROUS.

YOU'LL USE ME, DAMN YOU, OR I'LL BLOW THE LID RIGHT OFF...!

YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST ONE TO MAKE THAT THREAT. KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LAST ONE TO MAKE IT?
UH...NO. NO. I DON'T. NO.
DIED. IN THE EXERCISE YARD. GOT KNIFED IN THE BACK.

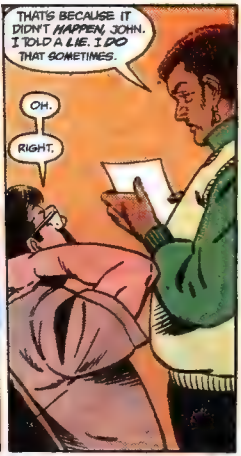
I DIDN'T MEAN IT I DIDN'T MEAN IT I WAS JUST KIDDING SWEAR TO GOD PLEASE


GET BACK TO YOUR CELL. WE'LL BE IN TOUCH.

HOMMINA HOMMINA HOMMINA
KLANG!

AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING SADISTIC... THAT WAS KIND OF FUN. SURE AS HELL PUT THE FEAR OF GOD INTO HIM.

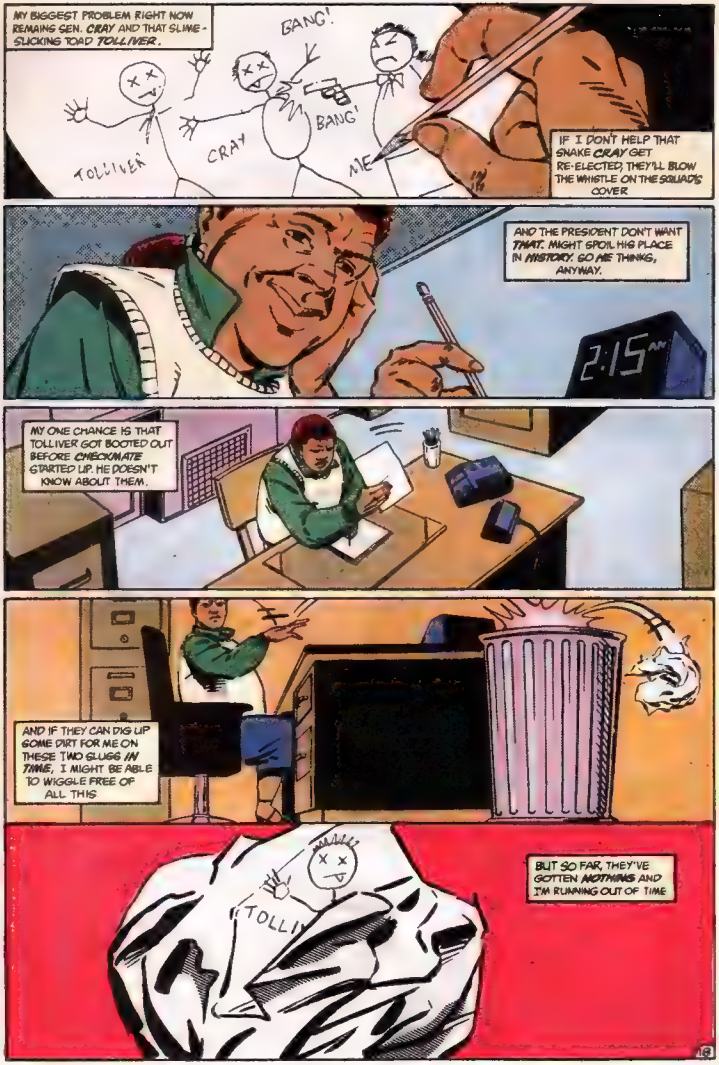
SO LONG AS HE HAS THE FEAR OF WALLER... THAT'S ALL I WANT.
WHICH PRISONER GOT KILLED IN THE YARD? I MEAN, I'M SUPPOSED TO BE WARDEN HERE--AMONG OTHER THINGS--AND I NEVER HEARD ABOUT IT!


THAT'S BECAUSE IT DIDN'T HAPPEN, JOHN. I TOLD A LIE. I DO THAT SOMETIMES.
OH.
RIGHT.

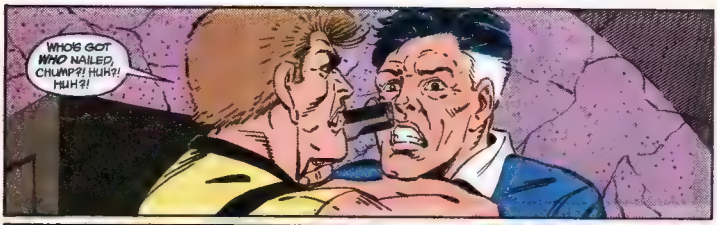
QUESTION IS--ARE WE GONNA USE HIM?
MAYBE. NEED SOME FRESH BLOOD AND WE'RE NOT SURE ABOUT YOUR BOY KAWAI YET.
AH, THE GUY'S A JOKE! HE GETS BEAT UP BY KIDS. WHY DO WE NEED ANOTHER PLITZ?

KRASH!

I DUNNO. THOUGHT I MIGHT MAKE HIM WARDEN. WHAT DO YOU SAY, JOHNNY?
HO.
HO HO HO HO.
OW!


MY BIGGEST PROBLEM RIGHT NOW REMAINS SEN. CRAY AND THAT SLIME-SUCKING TOAD TOLLIVER.
GANG!
BANG!
TOLLIVER
CRAY
ME
IF I DON'T HELP THAT SNAKE CRAY GET RE-ELECTED, THEY'LL BLOW THE WHISTLE ON THE SQUAD'S COVER
AND THE PRESIDENT DON'T WANT THAT. MIGHT SPOIL HIS PLACE IN HISTORY. GO ME THINKING, ANYWAY.
2:15
MY ONE CHANCE IS THAT TOLLIVER GOT BOOTED OUT BEFORE CHECKMATE STARTED UP. HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THEM.
AND IF THEY CAN DIG UP SOME DIRT FOR ME ON THESE TWO SLUGS IN TIME, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO WIGGLE FREE OF ALL THIS
TOLLI
BUT SO FAR, THEY'VE GOTTEN NOTHING AND I'M RUNNING OUT OF TIME

TOLLIVER ACTUALLY SHOWED UP AT BELLE REVE. THIS EVENING AND BULLIED HIS WAY INTO MY OFFICE.
THIS WON'T DO AT ALL.
SUCH A SMALL, SHABBY RESPECTABLE OFFICE. I'LL HAVE TO HAVE SOMETHING BETTER WHEN I ASSUME COMMAND
NOT GOING TO HAPPEN, TOLLIVER.
IT COULD HAPPEN TOMORROW, WALLER!
YOU AGREED TO HELP CRAY. YOU MANAGED TO BUY SOME TIME WITH THOSE MISSIONS YOU SENT YOUR SQUAD ON, BUT NOW, EVERYBODY CAN SEE YOU'RE JUST DRAGGING YOUR BROAD, FLAT FEET!
THE PRESIDENT IS ALL SET TO REMOVE YOU AND, IF HE DOES, I'LL TAKE OVER! I'VE NAILED YOU, WALLER.
HUH?
WHAM!


WHO'S GOT WHO NAILED, CHUMP?! HUH?! HUH?!

HOW MUCH OF THIS YOU HEAR, COLONEL?

EVERYTHING. I WAS RIGHT OUTSIDE.
CAME TO MAKE A REPORT AND OVERHEARD THE WHOLE DAMN THING! NOW I'M GOING TO...

YOU ARE LETTING HIM GO. RIGHT NOW.
OR, I SWEAR TO GOD, I'M RE-DECORATING MY OFFICE WITH YOUR BRAINS.

NEXT: MIRROR MASTER JOINS THE SQUAD!

SUICIDE NOTES

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Dear Editor,

SUICIDE SQUAD #15 was an interesting issue as well as being entertaining. Not only was Enchantress' origin revealed, we were treated to some very well-paced, well-plotted battle scenes.

The best part of the book lies on pages 8-11, where Enchantress tries to best the Incubus. Her blows are ineffective. Still, she's just warming up. She says, "Let's get down and dirty!" Then she gets clobbered. What a clever and important plot twist. If the Enchantress can't take him, who can? This builds tension.

It was ironic how June was commenting on the Incubus. She detests him for being smug and confident, and then unleashes Enchantress, who is both of those things. Nice touch.

A question. How come June is sexist? Was she traumatized by a male? On page 8 she links all males as being smug and confident. She is generalizing where she shouldn't be. I mean, I know that at least I can speak for myself on the matter. I'm not very confident on a lot of things and I happen to be male. Lots of people are sexist. It's a shame, but the fact exists. I just thought it was strange that June was sexist toward men because her Enchantress persona is smug, confident and of the female gender.

David Scott
1321 East Main
Emmett, ID 83617

Actually, David, the Enchantress persona was so strong, it colored all June's thinking and actions since about issue #5 (check back and see what I mean). With Enchantress gone, we'll see what sort of person June turns out to be.

*****

Mr. Greenberger,

A few words about SUICIDE SQUAD #15 before I go to bed after a long day.

After the Incubus's soliloquy, I think I am more confused than ever about the siblings and the Land of the Nightshades. I suppose that I will have to peruse this issue a couple more times to get a handle on everything; but hey, at least it means I'm getting my six bits' worth.

When I wrote in last month I made reference to the fact that it seemed unclear whose odyssey this really was. June Moone seemed more affected by what was happening than Eve. Upon seeing what transpired this issue, the confusion is much less (and I appreciate that). It really is Nightshade's story, although the Enchantress has a major role that is surprising yet makes perfect sense (well, almost). More and more I realize just how small the DC Universe has become.

As to the other characters, Mr. Ostrander continues to display his adept touch at personalities and action. Duchess was formidable. Is there nothing this woman can't do? Deadshot was all business, as usual. Nothing more, nothing less. Bronze Tiger and Vixen are so much alike. It's too bad they were really out of their respective elements here. And "Boomer-butt" was pathetic, as he has been more often of late. I like it.

Only one question: how come Larry/Incubus looks so much like Prince Valiant?

A lot of answers were forthcoming this time around. Some questions and uncertainties still remain. The upcoming final part of the trilogy should be intriguing. I shall be waiting.

Roger D. Case
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I dunno, Roger, maybe Luke likes the hairstyle.

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Dear Enchanters,

"Ooooooowahooooo! Witchy Woman! See how high she flieeeeeees..." Though I really hate to see the Enchantress go, I must applaud all of you for the ingenious plot device in which she was disposed. John, "You can do magic" when you mix a lot of action with a practical, cohesive storyline. Revealing the Enchantress entity to be the Succubus of the Nightshade dimension was an unexpected shock, to be sure, and an interesting way of "killing" her off. "Do you believe in Magic?" Perhaps when the time is right, we might get to see a new Enchantress emerge, but in the meantime, it was ironic to see June Moone screaming for her alter ego after trying to get rid of it for so long.

It was also ironic how deftly Deadshot disposed of the Incubus's host. This issue's cliffhanger was even more suspenseful than the last, leaving the reader anxious over the fates of June Moone, Eve Eden and the rest. A nice touch was Captain Boomerang doing nothing but "raalfing" all over the place.

The art was exhilarating, as usual. I especially liked the rendition of Azhmodeus and his flame-winged followers. It just goes to show the Suicide Squad can work greatly in otherworldly realms as well as their own.

"(You have to believe we are) Magic" when we fans rally to this book. All you have to do is say the word "Abracadabra" and we'll be there!

Neil Ahlquist
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Dear Robert,

SUICIDE SQUAD #15 was a great follow-up to the first part of the Nightshade story. The cover featuring Bronze Tiger was fabulous!

It's been interesting seeing how the Enchantress fits into this tale. I hope she and Eve come to some middle ground.

This Larry guy, or whoever he is, is one of the most demented villains I've seen (right up there with the Joker). I hope this isn't his one and only story.

My only complaint about the art is that the women look a little *too* husky.

Jeff Mitchell
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St. Paul, MN 55104

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Dear Bob,

Of all the issues so far, #15 probably contained fewer of the distinct elements that define the Suicide Squad from any other.

I believe that a comic book should try to emphasize those things that make it different from other comic books. What is it that is special about *this* book? Why should I buy *it* and not another one? With the Squad, the principal distinction is not that it is a super-hero team book, for instance. On the subject of teams, the thing that makes this book different is that the team is composed of criminals and "disturbed" others, all serving government interests to help themselves. Another aspect is the administration and support groups that are involved with the Squad—something that no other super-team has in any similar fashion.

However, these distinctive elements

were almost totally absent from #15. As far as this issue (by itself) is concerned, we had a super-hero team trying to help one of its members rescue a loved one. Standard stuff. Even the conflicts created by the Squad's makeup were virtually unseen. Heck, the only real baddie on the team was Captain Boomerang and he didn't have much to do but bicker and complain! (And such activities are, sadly, far from unknown even in "regular" super-teams!)

So #15 violated one of Maple's Laws of Comicdom: it didn't play to its own strengths.

And you know what? I don't much care.

I don't much care because it was a *good story*. And a good story makes up for a lot of "deficiencies" in structure. Indeed, a good story is *essential*, regardless of how cleverly a book's strengths are utilized!

The Incubus was a frightening and potent villain. The linking of the Succubus to the Enchantress was both unexpected and elegant in the way it tied things together. The method by which the Incubus was overcome was believable and unexpected. (A difficult combination when dealing with a powerful villain.) And it looks like it will not be without its consequences, as Nightshade is hardly the same person she was before.

So, you broke one of my laws and I let you get away with it. In fact, I loved it!

Just don't make a habit out of it, okay?

T.M. Maple
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Weston, Ontario M9L 2R9
CANADA

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Dear John, Robert, Luke, Todd and Company,

At the end of SS #15 we have the Squad (without Nightshade) being sucked into a whirlpool, Nightshade's home dimension destroyed and her brother, who had the power of gods, killed by simply shooting him through the head.

Now I ask you, is this any way to wrap up a comic book story?

First of all, I thought the whole point of the mission was not to simply rescue Nightshade's brother, but also to save Shadowland from the Incubus. You can hardly consider the mission accomplished when they kill her brother and destroy Shadowland.

I'm not one of those guys who expects the Squad to have successful missions every issue (in fact, it would be as boring as daytime TV if they did), but their success rate hasn't been very good lately. Like sports fans, comic fans like to see the hometeam win more often than they lose.

Second, my doubts about dragging Captain Boomerang along when he was drunk in issue #14 were confirmed in issue #15 when he didn't do anything but lie in a fetal position and moan. I have serious problems with a team going on a "suicide" mission and bringing a character along solely for comedy relief.

The best part of #15, for me, was that you people finally let the Enchantress cut loose. I wish you'd let her go on a rampage against a powerful villain more often. She needs to fight someone who matches her power level.

T.E. Pouncey
Wichita, KS

Actually, T.E., the Squad has done a reasonable job lately. In issues #11-12 they put a nasty dent into the South American drug pipeline and in issue #13 they helped arrange the freeing of Nemesis. Agreed, the team did not do their best in helping Eve rescue Larry and free her people but then again, the mission wasn't what anyone expected. The Nightshade dimension is in tatters and will be visited sometime in the future, somewhere in the DC Universe, and we'll see what happens. Also, remember that the Bronze Tiger promised Eve that everyone would be on the mission, he had never seen Boomerang drunk before and obviously miscalculated. Such miscalculations are exactly one of the human elements that makes this book unique.

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Dear Bob,

Re: SUICIDE SQUAD #15. That's it? After the buildup to this adventure in SECRET ORIGINS and SS #14, I was expecting something more. Larry/Incubus seemed very powerful but Deadshot took him out in one shot. It would have been a little better if Nightshade took him out, but I would still have been left with an empty feeling. I have to go back and read it again to make sure I didn't miss anything. I then thought that the story finished next issue, but it doesn't look like it. I hope I'm wrong!

I agree with Jody Hamby. This book has utilized some very deserving heroines. I hope this keeps up, especially after DC killed off one of its potentially great characters, Batgirl. I would like to see Firehawk and Magenta pop up in this book. They are two of the best women around. I also expect Manhunter to pop up. John Ostrander has it good; he can use Mark Shaw to capture anyone he wants for the Squad.

George Gustines
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Batgirl may be dead, but Barbara Gordon is recovering, thank you, and she will appear once more in the DC Universe. In fact, I know people with big plans for her and they don't involve exo-skeletons or costumes. Speaking of heroines, John is having such a wonderful time with Firehawk and Power Girl in FIRESTORM that he's not giving them up for this title. Magenta is an interesting thought, but we'll have to wait and ask Marv Wolfman.

As for Manhunter, keep reading.

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Dear Robert, John, Luke, Bob, Todd and Carl,

Back in SUICIDE SQUAD #7, you said that the Squad wouldn't meet the JLI on Apokolips because it wasn't a space group. I approved of that—but at the same time, I understand why issues #14-16 are taking place in the Land of the Nightshades and the Metz-Zone. This is, as the cover says, "Nightshade's Odyssey," and she is a fantasy-based character. We can go places with her at the helm that we couldn't go with, say, Speedy or Col. Flag.

However, while I enjoyed "Devil to Pay" in #15, I wouldn't like to see Task Force X make too many more forays into other dimensions. Plot has a way of overtaking events that way, and with the Squad usually carrying out a carefully designated mission (rescue someone, stop someone, and so forth), seeing the classic, almost cliched, scene in which a villain expounds a master plan to captive heroes feels wrong. Luckily, what Larry/Incubus expounded was very interesting and enlightening on Nightshade, the Dhazmor and the Enchantress. But come page 22 and the tailspin, where is Nightshade? Furthermore, with the Succubus out of her, June Moone is cured ... but she's also powerless. Will she regain her powers and then be able to deal with them better, knowing their source?

Ooops—getting ahead of myself again. To return to #15 proper, I thought Luke and Bob did a terrific job on the art, in particular with the ordinary-looking but consummately evil Larry (his smile as he told Capt. Boomerang who he was on page 2 was downright sinister), the cinematic cutting technique on pages 12-13 and the three-headed creature whom the Duchess destroyed. Helping them as much as ever was Carl with his coloring: his dimensional beings were majestic (Succubus and Incubus) and I loved his shading of the women's eyes—Enchantress on page 10 and Nightshade on page 20—to suggest the menace within them.

Now for John: the dialogue this time around had to do double-duty, for the majority of the Squad were prisoners until page 16. The Enchantress was good and out of control; her call to get "down and dirty" was frightening, yet oddly seductive. June Moone, however, sounded a little misanthropic in places ... was she smarting over Briscoe's snub in #11? Having the Duchess free the group was a good idea, but she still has to develop a dialogue pattern she can call her own: page 15, panel 4 made her sound like Deadshot, and her assessment of the "dissolving" Nightshade Dimension was clumsy. Jack Kirby created Lashina, but this woman is not with the Female Furies now.

As I expected, Boomerang couldn't really handle the Land of the Nightshades; Deadshot held up better. Their talk on page 17 was one of the funniest conversations outside of JLI, but the humor here—as when Vixen asked "Girl, just how many relatives you *got* in this place?" or when Nightshade said, "Larry, I don't think I want to be your big sister anymore"—advanced the action and gave us some insights into the people at hand.

My guess is that Nightshade will return to Earth without Larry—and that she will be as devastated as Flag was after Karin's death and the loss of an entire team in the Hawk rescue. Misery loves company, but with Eve's heart torn between so many men, she'd do best to seek out Father Craemer as soon as she arrives at Belle Reve.

Charles J. Sperling
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Flushing, NY 11354

P.S. Bob, I've commended you elsewhere for "A Princess' Story" but I wanted to do so here, too, since you edit this title and Nightshade appears regularly in it. The integration of another company's character into the DC Universe has never gone as smoothly as this, and most of the people involved (with the exception of Senator Eden) in Eve's development—King Faraday, Nemesis, Captain Atom, Jewelee—were very well portrayed.

Ah, Charles, you're making me blush.

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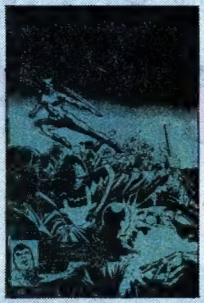
COMING ATTRACTIONS



Get out your calendars, start saving your pennies and get set for an extraordinary month.

It all starts **next week** when MANHUNTER #6 has Mark Shaw find clues to Argent. Remember, he went free-lance with that assignment back in issue #10 and now he has something. This will lead directly into SUICIDE SQUAD ANNUAL #1 the same week. In there, the lead story by John, Graham Nolan and Timothy Dzon, brings about the conclusion to the Argent saga. It guest stars Manhunter and brings back the threat of Kobra. And that's just the lead! In our Private Lives chapter, we look in on the family life of Amanda Waller courtesy of John, Keith Giffen and Bob Lewis. Wrapping that all up is a cover by Joe Brozowski and Karl Kesel. If that's not enough, Captain Boomerang joins with his fellow Rogues' Gallery buddies for a reunion in the pages of FLASH #19 by William Messner-Loebs, Jim Mooney and Larry Mahlstedt. The reason for the reunion? To welcome Capt. Cold back to the free world after having survived his mission in these pages, of course.

Then, a week after that, DEADSHOT #2 brings our hero hot on the trail of the people who stole his son. We also watch Marnie Herrs track down facts about Floyd Lawton's life and we meet Floyd's dad. That one is by John, Kim Yale and Luke and not to be missed.

And a month from now, or two weeks after DEADSHOT #2, we have our next issue. In #20, we deal with, once and for all, the Captain Boomerang/Mirror Master mess in a neat little tale by John, Luke and Bob with a cover by Karl Kesel himself.

That's quite a month and we hope to see you in all those spots. Until we next meet, keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger